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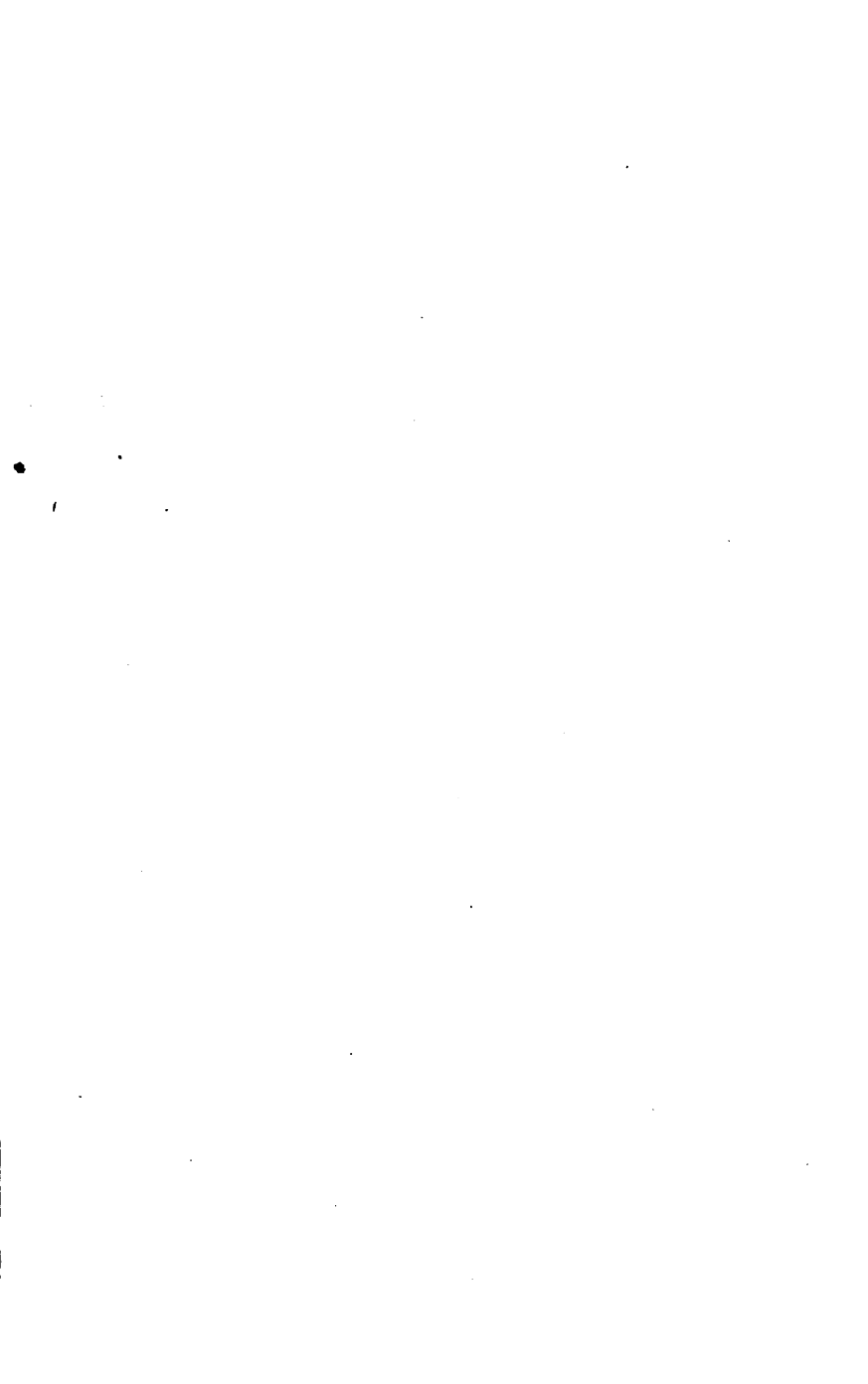
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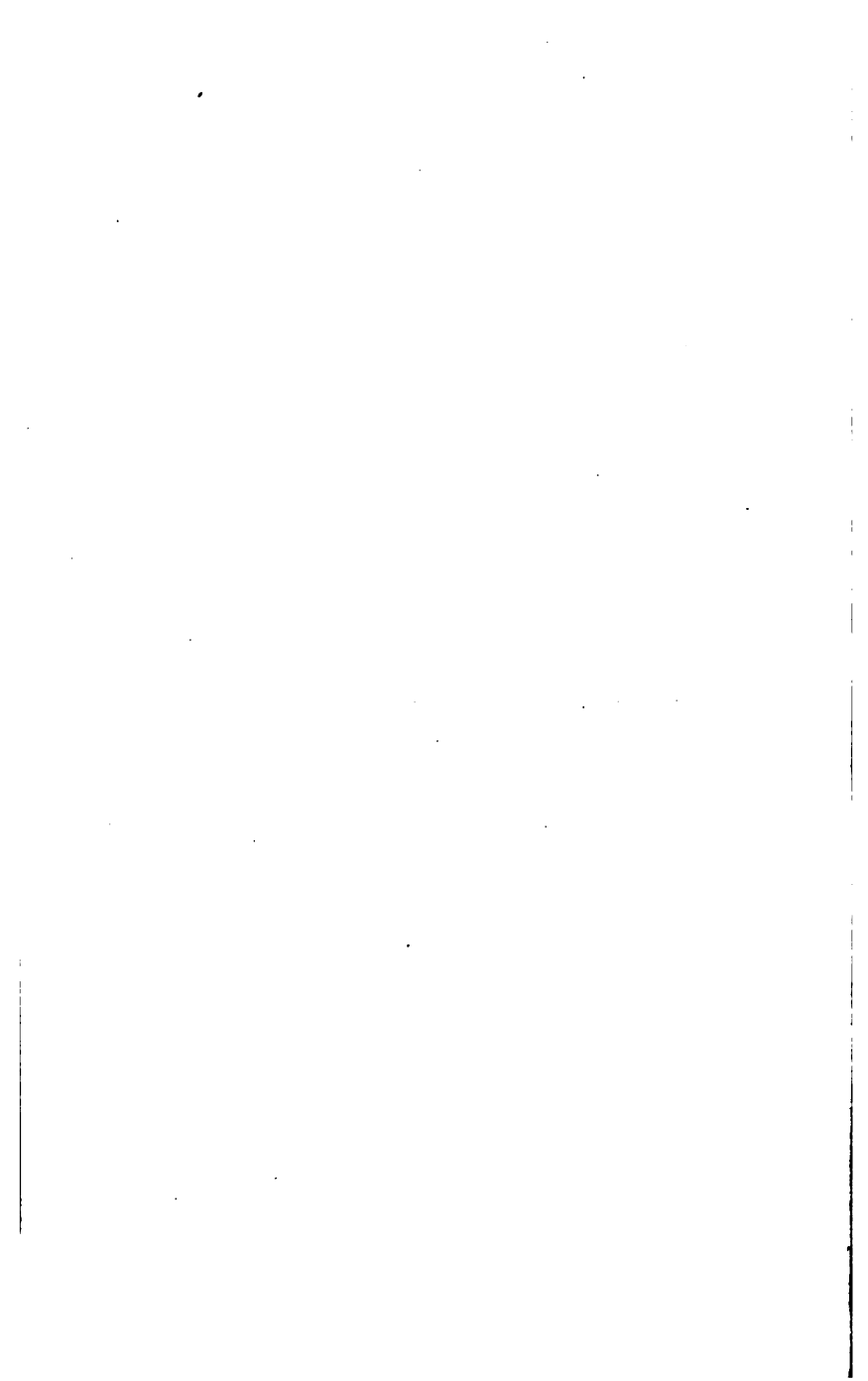
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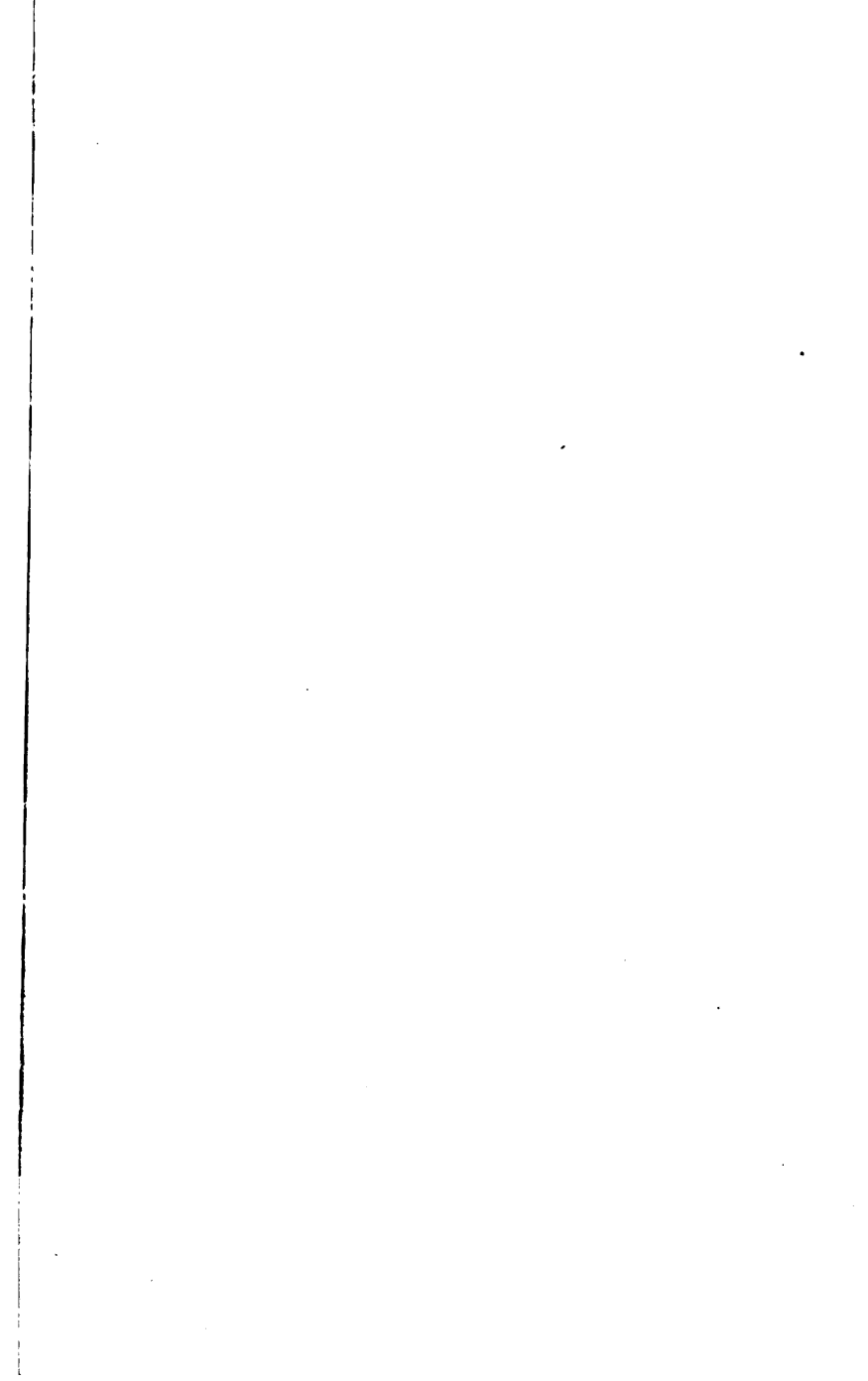
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Glenn H. Hies
Santa Barbara
April 1915











photograph by White, New York

THE GIRL (Miss Murdoch) and THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT (Mr. Powell) in "The Place of Quiet," Scene II.

ACROSS THE BORDER

A PLAY OF THE PRESENT

In one act and four scenes

BY

BEULAH MARIE DIX

Author of "Allison's Lad," "The Lonely Lady,"

Co-author of "The Road to Yesterday," "The Breed of the Treshams," "The Substitute," etc.

Illustrated from photographs of two scenes in the performance.



NEW YORK

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1915

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“Across the Border”

A Play of the Present

By B. M. Dix

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The people in the play speak English, but they are no more meant to be English than they are meant to be Austrian, French, German or Russian.

Senior Lieutenant.....	MR. TREVOR
The Corporal.....	MR. KINGSFORD
Boy Trooper.....	MR. EDGARD
First Trooper.....	MR. DONNELL
Second Trooper.....	MR. KAUSER
Junior Lieutenant.....	MR. POWELL
The Master of the House.....	MR. BLINN
The Old Woman.....	MRS. CARROLL
The Little Boy.....	MASTER CARROLL
The Girl.....	MISS MURDOCH
The Dark Man.....	MR. KAUSER
The Woman with the Baby.....	MISS POLINI
The Man Who Prays.....	MR. KAUSER
The Man Who Curses.....	MR. EDGARD
The Surgeon.....	MR. KINGSFORD
The Orderly.....	MR. GILMORE

SCENE I—The Hut. SCENE II—The Place of Quiet. SCENE III—The Place of Winds. SCENE IV—A Field Hospital.

Between the Scenes of this play, the curtain will be lowered for a few seconds only

Stage Manager: W. H. GILMORE

Music by the Princess Theatre String Quartet under the direction of MICHEL BERNSTEIN

The above, from a program of THE PRINCESS THEATRE, New York, shows the cast at the first public performance of this play, Tuesday evening, November 24, 1914, by THE PRINCESS PLAYERS under the direction of MR. HOLBROOK BLINN. A special matinee for the critics and other invited guests had been given in the afternoon.

Across the Border concluded the bill. It was preceded by *The Denial*, a one-act tragedy by J. B. Larrie; *The Fog*, a one-act emotional play by Frederick Truesdale; and *Nettie*, a one-act comedy by George Ade.

Before the New York run of *Across the Border* ended, it had been played by other companies in Boston and Chicago.

ACROSS THE BORDER

SCENE I

The Hut in the Wood

PEOPLE { THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT
THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT
THE CORPORAL
THREE TROOPERS

SCENE II

The Place of Quiet

PEOPLE { THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT
THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE
THE DARK MAN
THE GIRL
THE LITTLE BOY

SCENE III

The Place of Winds

PEOPLE { THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT
THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

SCENE IV

The Field Hospital

PEOPLE { THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT
THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT
THE SURGEON
THE ORDERLY
THE MAN WHO PRAYS
THE MAN WHO CURSES
THE GIRL

The Men in the Play speak English, because that is the language in which American plays are written, and they speak colloquial English, because no people, anywhere under the sun, talk like books. They are no more intended to be English, however, than they are intended to be Austrian, French, German, or Russian.

ACROSS THE BORDER

SCENE I

THE hut in the wood is narrow, dusky, and low studded. The walls, of dingy, weather-worn boards, are shot with chinks and knot-holes. The steeply sloped roof, festooned thick with cobwebs, is pierced at the center with a trap that is open. The floor is of trodden dirt. In the wall at the left, five or six feet from the floor, is a narrow unglazed window, with an old box beneath it. At the right, swinging inward, is a rude door, set a little ajar. At the back of the hut is a heap of moldering straw. At the right, toward the front, is a heap of sacks, spilling rotten apples.

The time is late afternoon in autumn. A very little waning light seeps through the cracks and the open door. On the straw several indistinct figures in uniform lie huddled. At the door, the window, and at an enlarged knot-hole, back, are troopers, alert, carbine in hand. A fourth trooper silently grubs among the rotten apples. Beneath the open trap, with faces upturned, stand THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT, a spare, tall

man of thirty, quiet and competent, and THE CORPORAL, an experienced non-com. of forty-odd, powerfully built, with a mustache slightly grizzled.

The men wear modern cavalry uniform, but not the distinctive uniform, in cut or color, of any one of the nations now at war. They are not parade soldiers, but men at bay, shabby, bemired, and battered. One trooper has a slit sleeve and a bandaged forearm, another an emergency bandage round forehead and jaw.

A few seconds of tense silence, then, from above, the voice of THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Heads below there! I'm coming.

[On the word, he drops, feet first, through the opening, into the arms of THE CORPORAL, who breaks his fall.

Thanks!

[THE CORPORAL withdraws to the door.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT brushes himself off at center. He is a slim, war-hardened youngster of twenty-three or four, with a face a shade more sensitive than is usually found in his profession. A nice likeable young fellow. You would cheerfully



Photograph by White, New York

THE DEFENSE OF THE HUT.



*ask him to dinner, or let him marry
your daughter.*

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

See anything?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Not a stir. They've got their bellyful.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Think so?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

If they hadn't cleared out, they'd have potted
me, there on the roof. What'll you bet?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Not betting.

[He takes out a cigarette.]

Got a light to spare?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Here you are!

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Thanks! My last. How far could you see?

6 ACROSS THE BORDER

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Beyond the strip of trees and well across the valley. There's no stirring. As soon as it gets a little darker, I'll risk it.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

You've about one chance in ten.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

About one in a thousand, unless somebody goes.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Hm!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Can't cut our way through, and carry them with us.

[With a movement of the head he indicates the huddled figures on the straw.]

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Hardly.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Can't stay here, with no water, and——

[He turns to the trooper who is grubbing among the apples.]

How's the grub, boys? Find anything?

FIRST TROOPER.

Nothing but apples, and they ain't fit for pigs, sir.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Nothing to eat, nothing to drink, and cartridges running short. Somebody's got to get back to headquarters and bring help.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Yes.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I know the country. Was through here in the first month of the war.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Let's have a look at the map.

[He takes from his pocket a map and an electric flash.]

Hold the flash, please!

[He spreads out the map.]

Here we are!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

There's the crossways where they cut us up this morning.

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THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Twenty miles to headquarters, I make it.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Less than that, if you go cross country.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Quite a village here.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I'll swing round it.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Here's the river.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I can swim it.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Don't waste that flash!

[He folds and pockets the map.]

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(Returning the flash).

I'll report at headquarters inside of six hours.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Aëroplane?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Well, I'm not going to walk, you can bank on that.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

What's the scheme?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I'll get a horse.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Drop it! You're one man, and the whole countryside against you.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I've got my revolver. And they know the uniform still. I'll get a horse. See you in the morning, and a few chaps with me.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Yes. It's the only way.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No question.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

If you get through, and we don't, send a line, will you? To my wife.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Sure thing.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

It's this month, you know, we expected the kid. Our first. Well! If you don't get through, and we happen to, any message?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Hardly. My mother isn't interested in me, greatly. Can't pass for thirty, when a tall beggar with a mustache steps up and sings out, "Hello, Mummy!"

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

And there's no one else?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Girl, you mean? No. Not unless you can flash a signal into dreamland.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Eh?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Oh, no. I'm not going off my head. Only place I've ever seen her, in dreams, that girl. I

always thought somehow, somewhere, I should meet her. I'd know her, if I did. She's everything to me that my mother wasn't. Everything that the other women aren't. Fragrance, light, life. But it's only in a dream. Getting dark, isn't it?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Past sunset.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Dark enough, I reckon. Better not lose time.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

You're right.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Southeast first, by the stars. There used to be a farm, off by itself, about three miles down the valley. There'll be a horse.

[Quite unostentatiously he moves a hand toward the revolver in his belt.]

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

See here! Keep your last shot.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Got a better way than that.

[He indicates his breast pocket.]

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Let us in!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Cyanide.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Since when?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

About a month ago. It was my squadron picked up that staff-lieutenant, alive, but with both his eyes gouged out. Don't worry! I'll use the cyanide in time.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

You'd better.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

It's dark enough now. I'll be stepping along.

[To THE CORPORAL.

All quiet?

THE CORPORAL.

Yes, sir.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Well, boys, I'm going to step over to headquarters. Be back at breakfast time, and a few chaps with me to have a share in the fun.

THE CORPORAL.

Good luck, sir!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Thanks! Oh, Corporal!

[He takes out a handful of cigarettes.

Share 'em up, will you? Maybe I shan't get round to smoking 'em.

THE CORPORAL.

Thank you, sir. I'm hoping——

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(Kindly).

Cut it out!

[He turns to THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

See you later!

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Good luck, old son!

*[Quickly and lightly, THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT goes out at the door.
A moment's silence.*

SECOND TROOPER.

So help me, he hasn't got a chance in ten!

THE CORPORAL.

Shut up!

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

How many meters d'ye make it, through the trees yonder, Corporal?

THE CORPORAL.

Not more than a hundred, sir.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

That's what I make it.

[He turns the flash upon his wrist-watch.
If he gets through the wood——

THE CORPORAL.

Three minutes would do it, sir.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Three minutes!

SECOND TROOPER.

He's a man, the Lieutenant. 'Struth A'-mighty, he's a man!

THE CORPORAL.

Did ye ever doubt it?

[A moment's pause.

Twenty mile alone, through this damned country! He'll get the medal of honor for this, all right.

THIRD TROOPER.

Wait till he gets through.

THE CORPORAL.

Shut your mouth!

[A moment's pause.]

SECOND TROOPER.

It's more nor five minutes a'ready.

FIRST TROOPER.

Bet ye he's through!

SECOND TROOPER.

'Struth A'mighty, he's——

[Three rifle shots, faint but clear, are heard in quick succession. A moment of appalled silence.]

THE CORPORAL.

That wasn't any revolver shot.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

No. Rifles.

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SECOND TROOPER.

God A'mighty, they've got him!

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Yes. They've got him.

[He snaps off his flash.]

The Stage is blotted out in darkness.

SCENE II

THERE is a moment of pitch-blackness. Then waves of darkness, as it were, are sensed to drive across the stage. From darkness the waves change to thick gray, to thin silver, through which indistinct shapes become visible, and the twinkle of lights. The mists clear. The interior of a cottage is revealed. The walls are sheathed in dark wood. There is no ceiling. In the rear wall, to the right, is a row of casement windows, through which can be seen, in far distance, a sky of palest sunset gold, which darkens, as the scene progresses, and is strewn with stars. Outside the windows are vines in flower. To the left of the windows is a wide Dutch door, with the upper half flung back. Through the door can be seen a wall of plum-colored brick, half masked with flowering vines and fruit trees in blossom. In the wall at the left is another row of casement windows. In the wall at the right is a great fireplace, where a glowing wood-fire burns low. At right angles to the hearth is a low-backed settle. There are benches beneath the casements, a dark chest against the wall at right front, a table with two

chairs at the center. Against the wall left back a narrow dark dresser bears some pewter cups and flagons. On the window ledges are flowering plants. On the table a low dish of spring flowers. On the chimneypiece, the table, and the window-ledge at the left are lighted candles in metal candlesticks. The time is early evening. The room throughout is indistinct with shadows.

On the settle, in the fire-glow, THE OLD WOMAN sits knitting something white. On the floor at her feet THE LITTLE BOY plays with blocks. On the chest at the right, lighted by the single candle on the chimneypiece above, THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE sits whittling at what seems some sort of toy. He is vigorously and strongly built, under middle age, a commanding and virile figure. By the window at the left THE GIRL is watering the plants from a gray earthen jug. She is about twenty, with fair hair, parted and coiled at the nape of her neck. All four people are clad as peasants, or as gentlefolk who have chosen the simple ways of peasants, in garments that for neutral color are like the shadows that fill the room.

Exquisitely the place and the people breathe of tranquillity. The one note of disharmony is struck by THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT. A white-faced, bareheaded figure, with his cocked re-

volver in his right hand, he stands alertly at the door, with the manner of one who, with every nerve taut, runs a desperate hazard. He casts a glance behind him, a glance into the room. Then he flings the door wide and enters, taking his position between the door and the casements at the right of the door, where he has the solid wall at his back. He speaks in a voice of command, but more arrogantly than he has spoken to his troopers.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Are you the master of the house? Is this your place?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE
(*Tranquilly whittling*).

More or less.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Is that youngster your son?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You might say so.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Come here! Yes, you, young chap. Come here to me!

[*Without fear* THE LITTLE BOY rises
and goes to him.]

THE LITTLE BOY.

What is that pretty shiny thing in your hand?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

That? My favorite toy. You have play-things, haven't you? This is mine.

[As the child comes within reach, he catches him, not too gently, by the arm, and holding him with his left hand, addresses the man.]

You know this uniform. You know what it stands for. I want a drink.

THE GIRL

(With grave courtesy).

I'll bring fresh water.

[She starts toward the door.]

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No. Not that way. Off the table, where I can watch you. No doping! Bring it!

[THE GIRL goes quietly to fetch water from the dresser.]

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Hadn't you better sit down?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(*Sneering*).

You're too kind. Get out your best horse, saddled and bridled. Be quick! This kid stays here with me. If you try any tricks—— You understand?

[THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE *has risen and leisurely stepped to the end of the settle. He is still tranquilly whittling.*

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

I wonder what you did with the last horse that you had?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

A peasant with a scythe ripped open his bowels this morning.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

So so! What became of the horse before that?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Pumped his heart out, one night when I rode with a dispatch.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

And the one before that?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

It's really not your business, but he put his foot into a rabbit-hole, first week of the war. I had to shoot him.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You seem unlucky with your horses. Or else you're rather careless. I'm afraid you'll have to go afoot.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I think not.

[He levels his revolver at THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.]

Get that horse and be quick about it or——

[As he is speaking, the wall behind THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT is seen, as it were, to melt. Behind him, and overtopping him, stands a DARK MAN, powerfully built, who, without hurry or noise, pinions him by the elbows.]

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(With the tremor of a startled thoroughbred).

God!

[His right arm is seen to twist outward, pivoted on the elbow. The revolver

falls to the floor. For a second he struggles to break the terrible grasp that has been laid upon him, then he controls himself and stands quiet, with head stiffly upheld.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE *closes and pockets his knife, and gives the completed toy to THE LITTLE BOY, who slips away to THE OLD WOMAN. Then he stoops and picks up the revolver.*

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

What's this? And what do you do with it?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(Savage with helplessness).

Kill.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Yes. But what?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Men.

[There is a moment's pause. The merciless grasp is telling on THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT. His erect head droops.

ACROSS THE BORDER

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Let him go now! Can't you see you're hurting him?

[THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT, *released, makes a few uncertain steps down stage, and stands swaying, while he moistens his lips.*

Quietly several men have come into the room. They are big, and tranquil. Over against them THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT, so competent at the beleaguered hut, seems immature and rather to be pitied.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

(*Handing the revolver to THE DARK MAN*).

But this thing—pitch it down the quarry hole, where it will do no one any harm.

[THE DARK MAN *goes out at the door and presently returns.*

You'd better sit down now. Hadn't you?

[THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT *looks about him, with the haggard eyes of a man who sees his worst nightmare made real. He fights hard to recover the semblance of jauntiness. He merely achieves a sneer.*

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

You're—too considerate.

[A bit unsteadily, he moves down stage, then, taking his last chance, thrusts his right hand swiftly into the breast of his coat. THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE, behind him, puts his right arm about THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT, gripping his right hand fast, while he slides his left arm under his chin, and holds him, half throttled, against his chest. Such is the disparity of strength that there is no suggestion of struggle. In a second the two face each other, THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE with the little packet of cyanide tablets, THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT nursing in his left hand a twisted right.]

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

What are these for?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Sure cure for headache.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

That's it, is it? Look here!

[He puts a hand on THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT'S shoulder.]

Nobody's going to hurt you. You don't need to be afraid. Sit down!

[Not ungently, he shoves him into the chair at the left of the table.]

Where's that drink he asked for?

THE GIRL

(She comes to the table, with the cup that she has filled at the dresser.)

Won't you take it? You don't need to think of treachery here.

[Hesitating, and only half reassured, THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT takes the cup, barely looking at her, and drinks slowly. As he sets down the cup, he looks up at her.]

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

But haven't I seen you before?

THE GIRL.

Perhaps. Where was it?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I can't think. That swipe on the head knocked me silly. I don't seem to see straight yet. Those flowers now—they look like the ones that come in April.

THE GIRL.

Yes, those are spring flowers.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

But it's autumn now.

THE GIRL.

Yet you couldn't mistake them, could you? Violets, windflowers, innocents—— Don't you know them?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I used to. Used to pick them, when I was a little shaver. But after I went to war school—they'd think a chap was soft that cared for such things.

[He puts his hand to his head.]

I wonder where I saw you.

[THE GIRL replaces the cup on the dresser, and sits on the bench at the left. THE DARK MAN is on the chest at the right. Several men and women—one woman with a baby—are on the bench at the back or standing up stage. The room is shadowy. It is hard really to say how many people have drifted in.]

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

(Seating himself at the right of the table).

So your head was hurt?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Nothing to speak of, no. I was trying to get across country, and they sniped me from the bushes. Grazed my head, must have. I rolled into a ditch, and they came piling after me. For a minute I thought I was done for, but somehow I shook them off, and then I hit the road here. I—I'm sorry if I was a bit unceremonious.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Yes. It's rather a pity to bully women and children.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Didn't realize anybody was friendly, here in these parts. And all's fair, you know, in war.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

What is it that you mean by war?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Are you joking?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Hardly. I want you to describe it.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

But—I don't understand.

[He looks about him, at the quiet people who gravely listen.]

Oh, I say! Perhaps you're one of those crazy communities—— I beg your pardon! I mean, perhaps you're a lot of people that don't own property, and think that war is a crime, and all that sort of rot. I've heard there are such people. But it's odd no one of the armies has broken through here and knocked your theories into a cocked hat.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

The armies haven't passed this way, not as armies. What are you hesitating for? It's not a thing to be ashamed of, is it, this war you make?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Ashamed? Rather not! This war, we're not waging it just for our national honor. It's for the sake of humanity.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Who is it that you mean by "we"?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

My country, the greatest country in the world, and the most enlightened. As a mark of our high civilization, we have the biggest fleet that sails the seas. Our newest battle ships cost fifteen million apiece.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

I don't think that means much to us. Can't you put it into other terms? Could you found a university with the price of a battle ship? Could you make a desert over into tilth? Could you stamp out a foul disease?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(Slightly sneering).

I never computed. At war school I learned only practical mathematics. The elevation of guns——

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

For what purpose?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

To kill.

[A moment's silence, fraught with the heaviness of shocked disapproval.

THE GIRL has winced at the word.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT feels the silence. After a moment he adds:

That is, we do not kill unless we are forced to. As I told you, we are the most civilized of nations. In proof of that, we have the greatest army that the world has ever seen.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Also to kill?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Why, not exactly. Rather, to keep the peace. A great army and a great navy safeguard a nation. No one dares attack us. So there is no bloodshed. You see?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Yes. But in spite of that, you say that there is just now war with you.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Oh, well, that is due to the outrageous actions of other nations. Because my country is

so rich and enlightened, the others all are jealous of us. So two of them attacked us, and then, as you see, we carried the war most gloriously into the heart of their country.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Just how do you go to work to make a war?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Well—our great ships went out to sea. Some of them unluckily ran into floating mines, or were met by submarines, and so blown to atoms.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

And the men who were upon them?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

That is fortune of war. The rest of the fleet met with the enemy's ships. Some they sunk, and some they burned, and some they drove upon the rocks, and a good many of their crew were drowned or smashed to pieces. After that we held the seas, so we sunk mines in all their harbors, and let no ships go out or in. In that way we cut off their supply of food.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You mean they starved?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

You bet they did!

THE OLD WOMAN.

But in your enemy's country there must have been also women and children.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Sure thing! Just so many useless mouths to feed. That way we brought them the quicker to submit themselves.

THE OLD WOMAN.

By starving the women and the children? I see.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

They must take their chances with the rest. But if you want to see really nervy work, watch the aviation corps! One night last month, a chap I knew in war school flew over a fortified town and dropped a bomb. Knocked the citadel into Kingdom Come, and killed a hundred people.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

By night? They were killed in their beds, maybe?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

The civilians, very likely.

THE WOMAN WITH THE BABY.

Do you mean that there were women, sleeping, with their little ones beside them?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

There may have been. But of course they had no business in a fortified town. Any soldier will tell you that.

[A moment's heavy silence.]

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

And what part do you take yourself, in this war for the good of civilization?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I'm in the cavalry. We march into the enemy's country. Whenever we catch him where he can't run away, we fight him, and usually we worst him.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

That is——

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

(Impatiently).

We kill him—a great many of him—all that we can reach.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

(Quite gently).

How do you kill him?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

In my branch of the service, we rely a good deal on the saber. I've seen a man's skull split with a good saber blow, or an arm lopped off. In the infantry they have the newest rifles, and for close work the bayonet. That's like a long knife, you know. You can drive it right through a man. But our artillery is the wonder! You ought to see our field-guns, mowing down long ranks of men, like so much heavy grass. There they are, coming against us, in massed formation, the fools! all bobbing caps, and white faces, and pointed bayonets, one minute yelling, living, leaping forward, and the next minute—well, not much leaping, you can wager! Just bloody pulp, with here and there

an arm or a leg that stirs, and a voice maybe that whines for water.

[*A pause. THE GIRL has shrunk away, with face averted. You could cut the stillness.*

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

And that is how you make war for humanity?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(*Cut by the tone.*)

But there never was a war more humanely fought—at least, as far as we are concerned. Our hospitals are well organized. It is seldom that a man is left more than three days untended. And we treat the enemy's wounded just as we treat our own. I've never known a wounded prisoner killed, except once or twice. We treat all our prisoners mighty decently.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You acted just now as if you expected decent treatment.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

The other side have used our men atrociously. With us it's quite different. If you question

our humanity—why, only see how well we've used the common people.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

The people of the country you invade?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

We never burn their farms or villages, unless, of course, they're so treacherous as to fire upon us, and then they must be punished. And there are strict orders given that no woman shall be molested. Why, to let you know how strict we are, just the other day a trooper of mine, and a very decent fellow, when not in liquor, maltreated a country girl, and I shot him on the spot. *[A silence.]*

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

And the girl?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Why, for her, unfortunately, it was too late. I had, however, done my best. But there's no suiting these people. That night her old fool of a father hacked up a sentinel of ours with a hatchet. So we had to hang him at his own door, and burn his farmhouse down.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

So that is what war is like, for humanity.
And that is the trade you follow? Were you
forced into it?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Not much! I am an officer.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

But how did you happen to be an officer?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Went to war school. Entered at twelve
years old and——

THE OLD WOMAN.

Do you mean that they took you as a little
boy, and began training you to kill people?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

If you call it so! What could they train us
to more honorable?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

'And the women of your country—the
mothers and wives and sweethearts—they don't

mind that you have killed men, and made women and little children starve?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Our women love their country.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Well, after all, I suppose you are merely clever heathen, and too much cannot be expected of you yet. If ever you should chance, as a nation, to come to know God——

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

But good Lord, we're Christians! Probably the most Christian nation under the sun. You wouldn't believe the money that we spend every year in sending missionaries to preach Christ among the yellow races and the black men. Why, you ought to have seen us, the day before we went away to the war. We gathered in the biggest square of our capital, thousands of us, all under arms, and we knelt down, bare-headed, while our priests gave us their blessing, and blessed our banners.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

And did they bless also the big guns and the battle ships, the sabers and the bombs?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I don't know, but after all, why shouldn't they? For we are fighting in God's cause, and He is always on our side, for we are always right.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You are sure of that?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Perfectly.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

And sure that God is sure of it?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I ought to be.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

In that surety, I take it, you would never be afraid to die?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

(In quick alarm).

What are you driving at?

[He controls himself.]

No. Of course I shouldn't be afraid.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

(Rising).

Ever thought of what it would be like, after you were dead?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

(Rather gently, putting a hand on his arm).

Ever thought that it would be like this?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

(Catching at the edge of the table).

Oh, no! You're fooling. This place—why, it's like places I've been in before. Like the farm where I went, when I was a kid, time I was sick. Like every place I've ever felt happy in, and rested. And you people, you're just like other people——

[His voice trails off. He looks about him slowly, at the tranquil folk that watch him, dispassionate and aloof. He flinches back in his chair, hardly more than a frightened boy.]

How did I get here, anyway? I've forgot the road. Thought they had me. I fell.

When I got up again, I just ran, blind. Where am I? Tell me! Tell me!

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.
You've crossed the border.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.
You mean I'm—I'm——

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.
Don't be frightened!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.
That time when they had me down—I died?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.
So you call it.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.
Then—is this Heaven?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.
Hardly. You have a long way yet to go before you get there.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.
But this isn't——

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

No. [The place you last came from is more like that, from what you say.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I didn't dream it would be like this. I didn't dream——

[*He looks up.*

But your roof! There is no roof. It's all open to the stars.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Yes.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

That's why it's springtime here?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Yes.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

It was springtime always, when I dreamed.

[*He turns to THE GIRL.*

I remember now where I saw you.

[*He rises.*

Don't you know me?

THE GIRL

(Risen, but aloof at the left).

From the moment you came.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I knew that I should find you, some day, somewhere. And when I found you, somehow I'd find all that I'd missed, back there. Fragrance, light, life. I'd——

[He makes a step toward her.

Won't you look at me?

THE GIRL.

Yes.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Not like that! Won't you——

THE GIRL

(Shrinking and pitiful).

Don't come near me! Please!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

But—I don't understand.

THE GIRL..

The smell of blood—it clings!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Blood——

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Have you forgot what you were just telling us?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I told you I'd fought honorably in a good cause.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Are you sure? Look at us!

[THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT *faces about. Grave eyes, condemnatory, are upon him. The room seems full of people. After a moment he speaks hotly.*

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

See here, you've no right! I've broken none of the rules. Of course, it's a hard game, war. But I didn't invent it. I've played fair. I'm reckoned a decent enough sort. I——

[*His voice trails off. He drops into the chair by the table, hiding his face in his hands. THE GIRL makes a swift movement, protective, maternal, as if she would go to him. THE MASTER*

OF THE HOUSE *stays her with a gesture.*

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE
(*After a moment.*)

Well?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Yes. I remember. That's what it was. They took me to a show, when I was a little chap. There were some creatures there, caged, horrible, dirty little brutes, that gibbered. People said they ate human flesh. You wouldn't have touched them with the tongs.

[*He raises his head.*

And that's the way you're all looking at me now.

[*He rises, fighting to control himself and the situation.*

But you haven't any right. You don't understand.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

I'm afraid it's you that don't understand yet. Come!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

You mean, I can't stay here?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You see, there are women and children here. We shouldn't want a dangerous wild beast loose among them.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

But that's absurd. You could trust me. Won't you let me stay? I'm a decent enough fellow.

[*He turns to THE GIRL.*

Can't you tell them that?

[*THE GIRL stands, turned from him, with her face hidden in her hands.*

Well, I don't give a damn!

[*He faces about, defiant.*

I've done nothing to be ashamed of. I——

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Come!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Where are you going to take me? What are you going to do to me?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Make you understand. Come!

The Stage is blotted out in darkness.

SCENE III

A *MOMENT of pitch-blackness. Then, as before, waves of darkness that grow less and less opaque, and at last clear. There is revealed a nook in an ice-bound place, that slopes downward, from left to right. At the foot of the slope, right, are the blackened walls and the doorway of a half-burned cottage. Otherwise all is ice. The ground sparkles with frost. A cold, steady light as of a winter moon.*

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE, casual as on a summer day, stands a little up the slope. Throughout be it noted that he speaks without vindictiveness and without sentimentality. THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT stands down the slope. He has buttoned his coat to the throat. His hair is seen to stir in the merciless wind. After a moment he speaks.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

It's—it's pretty cold here.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Yes.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No shelter anywhere?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You might try the cottage yonder.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(Glancing over his shoulder).

[That? Thanks, no!

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Why not?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Well, it's not so bad here.

*[With hands obviously numbed, he tries
to fasten his coat collar.]*

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

That won't do you any good, you know.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(Desisting).

I suppose not. How long are you going to keep me here?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Just as long as may be necessary.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I take it—on this side of things—I can't die of cold, and get through with it?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Oh, no.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Nor lose consciousness?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

No.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No way out of it. God's got me cinched, hasn't He?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Looks like it.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

This is hell, then?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Are you the chap that took the baby out of its mother's arms and spiked it on the iron fence round the dooryard?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No! We hanged him.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Yes. But that was not the last of him. You are a long way yet from the place where he has gone.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I suppose I ought to be grateful. Kiss the rod, and all that rot.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You seem to be.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I don't want to bellyache. I'm trying to down my medicine, but—God! I'm cold!

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

And tired, maybe?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(Almost inaudibly).

Yes.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Ever thought how they felt, the women and children and old folks that were turned out of their houses, when you burned their town? In January, wasn't it?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I've forgotten.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Things are remembered here. It was quite a pretty little town, before you soldiers marched into it, in the course of your war for humanity. There was a house for poor old women, down by the river, and an orphanage for little children, and an old gray church with ivy, where the birds nested. Do you remember the place any better now?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I was drunk that night.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

That didn't make it any better for the townspeople.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Three days and three nights in the saddle! I was trying to come down with pneumonia. Lots of our chaps sickened that way. We left them in a field hospital. Little shabby doctor—middle-aged civilian, failure at everything—you know the sort? When we came that way again, we found him with both hands lopped off, and our chaps choked to death with sawdust stuffed into their throats. O my God! I'm so tired of it all. If you'll only let me go back to that house where it was quiet and let me lie down and rest!

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Likely that was what some of those women thought, when they were trying to lug their children through the snow.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

You mean you're going to keep me here, freezing in the wind, because of them?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Ever heard of a book called the Bible?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

They've rammed it down my throat ever since I was born.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Then you know that it's written: "With what measure ye mete——"

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

But does that really mean anything?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

It does, here.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Nobody meant to burn their damned town. We wanted shelter ourselves, bad enough. Three days, three nights in the saddle. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't swallow. When a chap is sick like that at home, they dose him with hot things, and come every hour in the night to see if he needs anything. I was home once with a chap that had a mother fussed over him like that. But nobody bothers about you,

when you're on active service. I filled myself up with whiskey, and tumbled across the first bed. A girl's room, I think it must have been. I remember I caught my spurs in the dinky little coverlet. There was a picture of the Madonna over the table. And my orderly dragged me out, or I'd have burned in the bed, drunk. Some of our men did die that way. You see, we never meant to burn the town. But there's a few fools in every regiment—and a few devils.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

That's a good reason for the officers not to be drunk.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I know. I know. But we didn't mean to. I didn't mean to. Won't you let up on me? I can't stand this much longer.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Better go into the cottage.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

But why not?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

You know well enough.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You've got to go.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No! Don't make me! I'll do anything else.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You've no choice. Do as you're told.

[*With head hanging, THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT drags himself down the slope to the cottage, then faces about, panic-stricken.*]

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I can't! I tell you, I can't! Haven't you any mercy?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

How much mercy have you had for other people?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

But everything I did was according to the rules.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

And there are rules here. Go in there!

[THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT *stumbles to the doorway, where he stands clutching at the doorjamb with either hand.*

What do you see?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Oh God!

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

No. Don't cover your eyes. Look! Tell me what you see.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Charred rags. Charred wood. Bones.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Look at them! That was a very little child. You'll find the fragments of the cradle underneath it. Too little to run. Too little to understand. Clapped its hands and crowed, when it saw the pretty, tiny flames creep through the door. That's the old grandmother, bedridden. She couldn't run. She lay and watched the flames draw near.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I never meant it, God. I never meant it!

*[He slithers down on his knees, hiding
his face in his arms against the jamb
of the ruined door.]*

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

And that's the house-dog that wouldn't leave them. Perhaps the dog deserves a higher place in Heaven than you—that were drunk that night. Somehow none of you fellows seem to like to go back over the line of march, when you've fought your fight for humanity and the cause of civilization. Lots of you have come through here, first and last. Some that marched with Hannibal, and some that marched behind a man called Sherman. Some that burned a nation's capital, and some that tossed the fire-brands into a Kaffir kraal. Some that killed black babies, for whom half-naked mothers cried, and some that cast little children from their laced cradles into the snows to die. Doesn't make much difference here, whether the baby was black or white, whether it was a palace or a hut that burned. All we ask is that a man should take a quiet look at what he's done. And it's extraordinary how little any of them like it.

ACROSS THE BORDER 53

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(Brokenly).

Make me forget! God Almighty, make me forget!

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Oh, no. That won't happen. May as well get up.

[THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT *stumbles to his feet, and makes a groping step toward* THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

What makes it so dark?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Is it?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I—I can't see any more.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Better open your eyes.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I can't.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Your eyelids have frozen down. You must have been crying.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No! Oh, well, a fellow has to tell the truth here, I suppose.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

It's better so.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

It must have been the blood out of my heart. All the rest of me is ice. Queer! I haven't cried since my first night at war school. Not blankets enough. I was cold, and frightened, and lonesome.

[He puts out his hand.]

Are you there still?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Yes.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

You won't go away? You won't leave me alone?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Do you remember who said that?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Back in the trenches, ten months ago. A chap that lay between the lines—his legs torn off. I crawled out to him with a canteen of water. He begged me to stay.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

And you stayed?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

It was a soft thing to do.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

No doubt. But if you hadn't stayed, you'd have to be alone now.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Are you going to keep me in the cold forever?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

We don't measure time here.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Isn't the wind getting higher?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Is it the wind?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Don't you hear it?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Are you sure it's the wind? Listen!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No, it's not the wind. It's voices. Crying, screaming, wailing. Hundreds of voices. Thousands of voices. Women. Children. Men.

[He puts his numbed hands to his ears.]

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

(Quite gently he puts down THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT'S arm).

But that won't do any good.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

You mean—it's inside my head?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Inside your heart, perhaps. You said that wasn't ice.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I can pick them out, the different voices. I suppose that here—a man can't go mad and forget?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

No.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Back there, where I came from, things get easier after a while. Things that turned me sick, first week of the war, they were in the day's work later. But here—it's worse every minute.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Yes. Things are quite different here. Listen now! What voice is that?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

A baby crying. A very little baby. Fretful. It files a chap's nerves to listen to it. Crying all the time.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

It's hungry, you see. It cried like that till the hunger killed it. And the mother had to listen. Remember that night when you bivouacked by the river, and the cow that you were clever enough yourself to find hidden in a thicket? You had a good meal that night, you and your men. But a little child died, starved in its mother's arms, because you had fed full.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

My throat—it feels thicked up. Is it blood?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Perhaps.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

But I wouldn't have killed a child on purpose.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

I know. When your brother's child was sick, you walked the floor half the night, holding it in your arms.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Poor little beggar!

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

But you never dreamed that a peasant baby in a foreign land was the same as your brother's child. Listen again! What do you hear?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Ah-h! It's a girl screaming. Like the mare I had that smashed its leg. Horrible. It tears through you. Rips your heart. Why doesn't somebody do something?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You shot the man. Listen! You'll hear his death shriek. But it was half an hour too late.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Oh God! If they'd only be still!

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You've got to listen.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Children crying—hungry, freezing, tortured. Hundreds of 'em. Poor little devils! Old women—starving, stumbling, driven, mumbling their prayers that nobody minds. Mothers, crying over the smashed up things that were their

kids. Ah-h! That's the horses screeching. Don't you hear them? When a shell rips them up, they look at you beseeching. But you can't waste shot upon them. That's the chaps in hospital now—drying up with typhoid, rotting with dysentery—chaps on the battlefield, torn and mashed and mangled, two days of it, three days of it, and the wheels of the big guns grinding them to pulp. Ah-h! That's some chaps caught in the granary. It's burning. The flames are at them. That's a trainload of wounded, smashing through a bridge, stifling, drowning, helpless, rats in a trap. Men and women and children—hundreds of 'em, thousands of 'em, millions of 'em—— O my God! my God! Why don't You stop it? Why don't You stop it?

[He drops on his knees, grinding his head between his arms.]

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Did you do anything yourself to stop it?

[THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT crumples forward into the snow, and lies with face hidden and shoulders heaving.]

It's drifted through here, that wail of the world, for a long time now. Years. Centuries. Ages. God hears it. It repented Him once that He made the world. Always the crying comes up to us. Always misery and to spare.

But it's worse when you are making your righteous wars. For they're all righteous. There's never a man comes here but says, as you said, that his cause is just and that God is on his side. It's wonderful how many ages through, as you reckon time, you men have fought your righteous wars to advance civilization, and you're advancing it to-day just the same way that you did when Attila was king.

[THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT *lies exhausted and quiet, save that one hand clenches and unclenches with the gesture of a man in torment.*

'Are you still sure that you're a decent sort enough, and that we're too hard upon you?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

If only those little kids would stop crying, just for a minute! And that's a woman in childbirth, and the town around her blazing.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Perhaps you're beginning to understand.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(Drags himself up sitting).

I don't want to shove it off on other people's shoulders. But back there, it's so different.

First toy my father ever put into my hands was a little sword. Only time my mother ever seemed much to care about me, was when she saw me first in uniform. Wasn't a man in our country that wouldn't open his door to me, when he saw my shoulder-straps. When we marched into the capital, after our first campaign, women we didn't know flung their arms about us and kissed us. Decent women. Not street walkers. All flowers, and claps on the shoulder, and bugles, and cheers, and the rest of it—and the end of it all, to lie here blind and perishing, and see behind my eyelids everything I ever turned my eyes away from, and hear every sound I ever stopped my ears against. If only those people would stop crying! I'm sorry. Is there anything—you could do to me—anything worse than you've done—that would make them stop?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Nothing. Because those are echoes that you hear—echoes of cries that have gone up already.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

But they're crying still, back there?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Yes. Your war for humanity is in full swing. Plenty of people are crying, you can be sure.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Women, and men, and the poor little tads, and fellows like me, that mean well enough, that think they're doing a fine thing, keeping on with it.

[He rises.]

Why doesn't someone go and tell them what it is that they're doing? If they understood——

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Someone went once and told them.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Oh, no, never.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Yes. They crucified Him.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I didn't mean that. Not anything religious. I meant if a chap like themselves—if he went and told a few of them—just as I'd tell it to the fellows that I know.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Would you like to go back there and try to tell them?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No, no! Don't send me back there! Not back into the thick of it again! I'd rather freeze piecemeal. I'd rather hear the echo of all the crying that ever was than hear another human cry.

[He catches blindly at the other's arm.]

You won't send me back? You won't make me?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

(Not shaking him off).

Oh, no! We'll have to let you stay. They hacked your body considerably, after you dropped, there in the ditch. Still freezing, are you?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No. I suppose I'm getting used to it.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

No. One doesn't get used to it, here.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Do you mean—you're letting up on me?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You seem to have the beginnings of understanding. That's all we ask. What do you hear now?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Just the wind. Rather faint. Oh! It's good, the quiet.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You can open your eyes, can't you?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT,

(Drawing a hand across his eyes).

Why, yes. You're—you're letting me off quite easy.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

We don't need to stay here any longer.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Are you going to let me—go back—to that house?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

No. You're not fit.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Where am I going?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

A place where you can rest.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Rest!

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Come on!

[THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT *hesitates*.
Well?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Could I go back, if I wanted to?

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Where the war is? Do you want to?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

If I went back, I could make one or two of
them understand.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

(*Dispassionately*).

Do you think so?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

The Senior Lieutenant, he's a pal of mine. I could make him see it. I'd like to try. It's all such a waste. Such a pity.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You know, you're already through the worst of it here.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I hope so.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

And you'll have a pretty bad time back there. Your body is smashed. You'll have to suffer rather hideous pain.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Well, that's in the day's work.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You have about one chance in ten to make them listen. Still want to try it?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I think so, yes.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

(Putting a hand on his shoulder).

There'll be someone on the lookout for you,
when you cross the border again.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I'll be glad to see someone I know. Being
alone, it's rather ghastly. I say! You'd bet-
ter let me go back quick, before—well, before
I lose my nerve.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

You're sure you want to?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Yes.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

One chance in ten, remember!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I'll take it.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Good luck, my son!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I'll find you again! -

The Stage is blotted out in darkness.

SCENE IV

THE Field Hospital is established in a peasant's cottage, the substance of THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT'S vision of Scene II. The dark walls are wainscoted. The ceiling is raftered. The Dutch door, to the left of center, back, is closed. The casements, at back and left, look upon black night. On the hearth at the right is a fire, on which a kettle of water heats. Across the hearth is a common deal table, that has been used for operating. On this table are a basin and a pan with surgical instruments. At the right front, against the wall, is a settle, upon which are a case of bandages, a couple of bloodstained towels, and a soiled surgeon's coat. Upon the chimneypiece are lighted candles. A chair or two and a stool, rude furnishings of the cottage, have been shoved aside to make place for army cots, hastily set up and supplied with blankets. At the left front is the rude bedstead, fetched from the cottage chamber. The place is indescribably squalid and dreary. You can fairly smell the disinfectants.

The time is about three o'clock of an autumn morning, chill and dismal, with falling rain.

In the cots lie several wounded men, heavily bandaged. They are quiet, deadened with pain, except for one who moans half conscious prayers, and another, stocky and bullet-headed, who curses. In the bed lies THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT. His face is dead white, the hair damp on his forehead. He lies with eyes closed, but from time to time he shifts his head upon the pillow, like a man in the extremity of pain.

THE MAN WHO PRAYS.

O Mother of Pity!

THE MAN WHO CURSES.

Shut up, damn ye! Can't ye let a fellow Christian get a wink o' sleep? I tell ye, mate, if I could rise out o' this bed, I'd soon put a stopper on your praying.

THE MAN WHO PRAYS.

Our Father in Heaven!

THE MAN WHO CURSES.

What you making such a row about, anyhow? Ain't ye got one leg left, you greedy

swine? Take example by that chap there, and shut up!

[*He indicates* THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

He's nice and quiet, he is.

[THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT *opens his eyes, and lies staring before him, with his lip caught between his teeth. His right hand clenches and unclenches with the gesture of a man in torment.*

THE MAN WHO PRAYS.

Thy will be done. Oh, pitiful Christ!

THE MAN WHO CURSES.

Grateful little party, you are, laying there all night complaining. Think o' yer dear country, that leaves ye laying here to rot in a sewer. Think o' the good kind doctor that's sneaked away to pickle himself in whiskey, and I hope it rots his guts for him! Think o' the nice sweet lady nurses that have beat it back o' the lines, cause they didn't want to put their little tootsies into blood and muck. 'Tain't like the story books, they found, tending on stinking muckers such as us.

THE MAN WHO PRAYS.

God have mercy upon us!

THE MAN WHO CURSES.

Dyin' on the Field o' Glory, that's what they call it, the writer blokes that cracked their lily-white throats, a-tellin' us to go and bleed for our precious country! Field o' Glory! Wisht they was stretched themselves upon a bed o' blazes like I be! Ah-h! God damn 'em, like we're damned ourselves! Damned and dyin'! Wisht that I could die!

[In the distance, and throughout the scene at intervals, the reverberation of big guns.]

Hark ye there now, matey! They're at it again in the trenches. Give 'em pepper, boys! That's the hot stuff. Give 'em hell!

[With a shudder, THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT closes his eyes. Still, from time to time, he shifts his head on the pillow.]

Wisht I was there with my old rifle. She's a bird, she is. Hey there, matey! Seventeen of the damned dirty scutts I've sent to boil in brimstone since this bloody war begun. You haven't done as much, I bet, you a-snivelling your prayers to a God that ain't there. I'd

'a' made it a round dozen and a half, if that blasted shrapnel hadn't got me, God rot the luck!

[The door is thrown open. Beyond it is seen a naked, slimy wall, a rotting cask, rain slithering past. Enter THE SURGEON, a civilian, with a three days' beard, haggard, petulant, over-driven, THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT, and THE ORDERLY, with a lantern. This last is a convalescent soldier, in uniform, with a Red Cross on his sleeve.]

THE SURGEON.

Look out! It's slippery round that threshold.

[To THE ORDERLY.]

You haven't washed up here, as I told you. Good Lord! Can't I get anybody to do anything? And then they think I can operate in a light like that.

[THE ORDERLY sets down the lantern, and goes to give a drink to THE MAN WHO CURSES.]

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Let me see him.

THE SURGEON.

(Takes the lantern and throws the light on the ghastly face of THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT).

Is this the man you're looking for?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Yes. Hard work to locate him. Thought I'd find him at the base.

THE SURGEON.

What would be the use of sending him to the rear?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

No hope?

THE SURGEON.

A miracle he ever came to. And rather a pity. I can't do anything for him. I kept him filled up with morphine, but it's wearing off, and I've no more left to give him.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(Shifting his head, with eyes closed).

Only one chance in ten. I'll take it.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

He was trying to bring us help, you see. It wasn't any use.

THE SURGEON.

You were relieved, after all?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Yes. Just waste, what he's been through. No help to anybody. Queer!

THE SURGEON.

Nothing's queer any more. All in the day's work. Will you stay?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

For a minute, yes.

[THE SURGEON goes the rounds, examining his patients. Far off is the boom of guns. For the second time THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT opens his tortured eyes.]

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Well, old son? Know me, don't you?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Yes.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Hard luck.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

What—time is it?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Three in the morning.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

When?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

It was evening before last you started cross country.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Across the border. Yes. Will you—wipe my face, please? The sweat—keeps getting into my eyes. Thanks!

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Shall I get you a drink of water?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No use! The taste of blood—I can't wash it out of my throat. Is it raining?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Yes.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Is there air outside—clean—anywhere? The disinfectants—strangle me. That's the guns, isn't it?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

The beggars are trying to rush us, on the left.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Killing—killing—killing! Why doesn't God stop it?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Got to be going, old man. Any message I can send your people?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Message? I had one for you.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

(Soothingly).

Better let it wait!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No, for you. For your kid, when he comes.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

You remembered? Got a telegram, delayed, two hours ago. I have a son. A week old now.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Don't give him a sword! We're wasting the others—wasting ourselves—wasting—wasting. And the cries go up to God forever—forever! Only they don't measure time over there.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT

(Soothingly).

That's all right. I understand.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No, no. But they'll make you. Cut it out, while there's time. For the kids like yours that are coming after us. Won't you try to make them stop?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Stop what, old son?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Killing—killing—killing! Righteous war.
O God! I'm so tired.

[*He closes his eyes.*
Won't You let me rest?

THE SURGEON

(*Coming down*).

How goes it?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Clean off his head. A rotten shame! He
was a mighty decent sort.

THE SURGEON.

[They're not human, those snipers.

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Going through there now. Just got my
orders. When I get through that valley, there'll
not be food enough to make a sparrow's break-
fast. Not shelter for a field mouse. Not a
man or a boy alive that I catch with so much
as a muck-fork in his hands. We'll put a stop
to this sort of thing.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(Opening his eyes).

For God's sake, no! Oh, can't you understand?

THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT.

Yes, yes, I understand. Just go to sleep now. So long, old son!

[THE SENIOR LIEUTENANT goes out.]

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Stop him!

THE SURGEON.

Easy does it! Easy!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Only listen to me! Listen!

THE SURGEON.

We'll talk that over in the daylight. You go to sleep now.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

I'm not off my head. It's you that are crazy. Poor chaps! Poor chaps!

[With a gasp of pain.]

Ah-h!

THE SURGEON.

You see, you make it worse, getting excited. Just lie quiet, and stop worrying. I'll be round again in an hour.

[*To THE ORDERLY.*

You stay on duty. Hear me? They're hard at it in the trenches. We'll have our hands full, all right, before daybreak.

[*THE SURGEON goes out.*

THE MAN WHO CURSES.

Matey! Got a pipeful of tobacco you can spare?

THE ORDERLY.

No, I ain't. Damned luck! Hear 'em out there? If they break through, 'twill be merry hell for us.

THE MAN WHO CURSES.

Goramighty, if I had my rifle! I'd like to pot one more of the skunks before I go.

THE MAN WHO PRAYS.

Lord, have pity upon us!

THE ORDERLY

(*Pausing with his lantern by THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT*).

He's the lucky one. He'll croak before daylight.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT

(*Opening his eyes*).

Can't you understand?

THE ORDERLY.

Do anything for you, sir?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Perhaps you're the one—I came back to tell. Only stop killing! We're all wrong. We're——

THE ORDERLY.

I can't stand talking, sir. Doesn't help you none. You cuddle down and forget about it.

[*Goes to door.*]

THE MAN WHO CURSES.

Hey, matey! Are you going to cut and leave us?

THE ORDERLY.

There's fifteen more of you in the stable cross the yard, a-keeping me on the jump. You want a private ward, you do, old grouch, with a velvet carpet and a china basin, by God!

[THE ORDERLY goes out with the lantern. In the gust of the closing door the candles on the chimneypiece are blown out. The room is now only dimly lit by the fire.]

THE MAN WHO CURSES.

Damn your soul! If I could stand on my legs, I'd shove the grin off your face so quick 'twould raise a blister. Ah-h! Look ye there now! Can't even spare us a light to die by, blast their eyes!

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Would you listen?

THE MAN WHO CURSES.

I would not, and don't you go to try. You ain't wearing shoulder-straps now, Mr. Lieutenant. They went with the bloody coat they stripped off you. You're just a lump of corpse on the way to being worms' meat with the rest of us.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Man to man—that's all I meant. I want to tell you——

THE MAN WHO CURSES.

Can ye tell me how to grow a good sound leg where a leg used to be? Can ye put me back on the line, with my old rifle in the bight of my arm, the darling! and the dirty scutts a-coming at us? Can ye help me make my tally a round dozen and a half of the beggars slammed to hell?

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

No use—no use.

THE MAN WHO CURSES.

If you can't do that for me, choke yourself and your line o' talk. Lieutenant or no lieutenant, shut up and let me sleep!

[THE MAN WHO CURSES *closes his eyes.* THE MAN WHO PRAYS *lies with eyes open, silent. For a moment there is quiet in the ghastly room.*

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

[They won't listen.

[Guns in the distance.

If You'd only let me rest!

[He closes his eyes. At back the wall

melts, and THE GIRL, with a long cloak folded about her, comes softly into the room and stands by his bed.

Queer! I don't mind the disinfectants. Getting used to them, maybe. No, it's violets. Violets—windflowers—innocents. They sound so frightfully cool and good. Like a hand on your cheek.

[THE GIRL lays a hand against his cheek.

There's water running over a weir—cool water with shadows—to wash away the blood. There's deep grass—and cattle grazing. There's a sun dropped low—behind the trees. Quiet light. A place where a chap can rest.

[He opens his eyes and looks up at her, but without surprise.

I'm dreaming?

THE GIRL.

No, this is real. All before this was the dream.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Don't leave me!

THE GIRL..

No.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

It's ghastly, being alone. And the pain was rather nasty. Doesn't matter now. You're—you're not—disgusted with me still?

THE GIRL

(Putting her hand on his helpless hand).

Dear! My dear! I've come to take you home.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

They never wanted me much at home. I wasn't—ornamental, after my voice cracked. Always thought it would be—somehow like the place where I saw you—where they chucked me out.

THE GIRL.

That's where you're going now with me.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Forever?

THE GIRL.

We don't measure time there.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

But—I don't belong with you, do I?

THE GIRL.

Yes, yes! You belong there now.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

But they wouldn't hear me.

THE GIRL.

You tried. That's what counts. Now you're coming home with me to rest.

THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT.

Rest!

[THE GIRL *bends and kisses him, then, softly as she has come, goes out again.* THE JUNIOR LIEUTENANT *lies stark and motionless, with closed eyes. A moment's silence. The guns in the distance are booming. The door is re-opened. THE SURGEON comes in, followed by THE ORDERLY, with the lantern.*

THE SURGEON.

Well, I told you to stay here, you loafer! Get busy!

[*He relights the candles.*
They'll have the first of the fresh lot here

any minute. How in hell do they think I can operate in this light?

[He strips off his coat, and, through the ensuing, slips on the soiled surgeon's coat that lies on the settle, gets water from the kettle, and washes his hands at the basin on the table.]

THE MAN WHO PRAYS

(To THE ORDERLY).

Where did she go?

THE ORDERLY.

Who d'ye mean?

THE MAN WHO PRAYS.

The Red Cross nurse. I saw her in the room.

THE ORDERLY.

You're dreaming. We're not risking any skirts on the firing line these days.

[He comes down to the bed.]

Hello!

*[He puts a hand on THE JUNIOR
LIEUTENANT'S heart.]*

He's pulled out, sir!

THE SURGEON.

Eh? Best thing for him. Wonder he held on so long. Call another orderly. Clear the bed. We'll need it in a hurry.

[With a touch of decency, THE ORDERLY starts to fold the limp hands on the dead man's breast. He starts back with an exclamation.]

THE ORDERLY.

By God!

THE SURGEON.

Well, what now? What's the matter with you?

THE ORDERLY.

I thought for a minute—I thought 'twas some purple flowers he had crumpled up in his hand.

THE SURGEON.

You're dippy.

THE ORDERLY.

Say, he looks mighty quiet, poor tyke, after all the pain.

[The door is flung open. Outside, un-

der the rain, are seen two Red Cross bearers, with a stretcher, on which lies a bloodstained figure.

THE SURGEON

(Drying his hands).

Well, we've no time to stand sentimentalizing. Get that bed clear! This is war.

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

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